

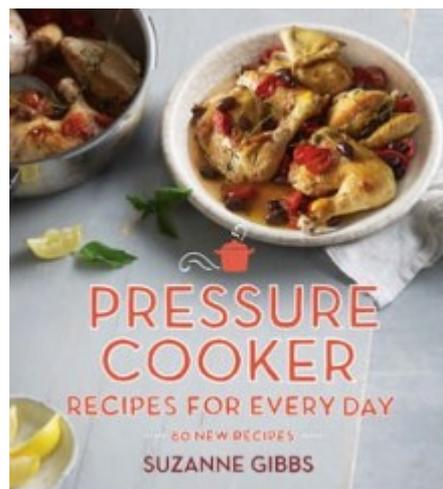
# Pressure Cooker Recipes for Every Day

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## Extract

### Introduction

Sitting here at my desk with the autumn sun peering through the window, quietly recovering from a blustery weekend, as well as a head cold, I am comforted by the sound of my man dicing up vegetables, shredding greens and cooking dried beans to make a big pot of ribollita, a hearty Tuscan soup full of good things.



And although you might think 'good time to get out the pressure cooker', and it is, it's not coming out of storage because I use my loyal pressure cooker all year round. Yes, it's a natural in the cooler months for warming and comforting soups and stews, but there are also plenty of summer dishes requiring dried legumes and pulses, and it's great for speed-cooking glorious Mediterranean-style vegetables. Then there are the all-year possibilities, such as rillettes, roasts, quick potato dishes, dips, rice dishes (especially risotto) and desserts.

The extraordinary truth is that every person I've met who hasn't tried using a pressure cooker is frightened by the myth that often accompanies it, fearful that it might blow up on them. Once I've had 30 minutes with this same person, in my kitchen or theirs, and they've seen the process and tasted the results, they invariably set off to buy a pressure cooker of their own. Without exception, they never look back.

Every pressure-cooker enthusiast has a story of the time he or she first realised the potential of these wonderful pots. Mine came one cool August day when my good friend Lucy, a Cordon Bleu cook who has lived in France for most of her life, brought her pressure cooker to a picnic (for as she explained to me, every French household has one!). She lifted the lid to reveal aromatic braised cubes of pork shoulder in a rich, red chilli sauce – the kind of stew that usually requires hours of slow simmering – and I decided then and there to forget my early childhood memories of spitting jiggler valves and explosions and get myself one of these beauties. Pronto.

That chilli stays in my memory. It was rich and fullbodied, with pork that fell into pieces at the slightest urging of my fork. I realised then that the slow-cooked stews and braises I love so much could be made on short notice any night of the week, and my pressure cooker has played a vital role in my kitchen ever since.

### No More Rattling Time Bombs

In addition to reducing the cooking time there are other significant benefits. The pressure cooker is a great vehicle for cooking cheaper, but usually more flavoursome cuts of meat, like chuck, shoulder and braising steak, as well as dried beans, peas and lentils. The results are succulent and full of flavour, with even the toughest cuts of meat becoming wonderfully tender. Pressure-cooked food is also healthy as all the goodness of the raw ingredients is retained in the pot.

The pressure cookers you'll find in stores today are a world away from their predecessors, which were thin-bottomed aluminum pots with jiggling steam regulators that often clogged, resulting in the occasional lid flying off. The new 'second-generation' cookers have locking lids that prevent pressure from building if the pots aren't sealed properly and safety valves that release steam if the pressure gets too high, making those legendary (and perhaps apocryphal) kitchen mishaps a thing of the past.

They're also quieter. A gentle hissing is the only sound you'll hear from contemporary cookers. In over a decade of using my pressure cooker, and after testing several models for this book, I've never had a lid fly off or felt I had a time bomb ticking on my stove. Do use common sense, though. Never leave the house with a pressure cooker on the stove or leave one unattended for too long. It won't blow up, but steam could be released through the safety valve and the pot could cook dry.